



EASTSIDE ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT PROJECT

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BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE EASTSIDE EIS

The following information is intended to provide you with additional information about the Eastside Ecosystem Management Project (EEMP) and the Eastside EIS that will be prepared as a result of this effort.

ANALYSIS AREA

The Eastside EIS will address all lands east of the crest of the Cascade Mountains in the states of Oregon and Washington that are managed by the Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management. The selected alternative will amend the Forest Service Regional Guide for Oregon and Washington and amend or revise the Land Management Plans (forest plans) for the Colville, that part of the Gifford Pinchot east of the Cascade crest, Okanogan, portions of the Umatilla, and Wenatchee National Forests in Washington; the Deschutes, Fremont, Malheur, that part of the Mt. Hood east of the Cascade crest, Ochoco, portions of the Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman, and Winema National Forests and the Crooked River National Grassland in Oregon.

The BLM Resource Management Plans (RMPs) and Management Framework Plans (MFPs) which are within the Eastside EIS area include the Spokane RMP (Spokane District), Baker RMP, Southern Malheur MFP, Northern Malheur MFP (Vale District), Brothers-LaPine, Two Rivers and John Day RMPs (Prineville District), Three Rivers RMP and Andrews MFP (Burns District), High Desert MFP, Warner Lakes MFP, and the Klamath Falls RMP which is in progress (Lakeview District). The general location figure on this mailer provides a general overview of the Oregon/Washington EIS analysis area as currently envisioned by the team.

THE EASTSIDE ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT PROJECT (EEMP)

To support the Eastside EIS, a basin-wide assessment will be made for the interior Columbia River Basin (roughly described as that portion of the Columbia River upstream from Bonneville Dam) and other land areas within eastern Oregon that are outside the Columbia River Basin. This assessment will be completed by an interagency team of scientists (the Science Integration Team) and will characterize and assess broad ecosystems and describe social, economic, and ecological processes and functions.

The natural resources within this broad geographic area have been altered over time by many factors including drought, fire suppression, livestock grazing, mining, timber harvest and management, water uses for energy and irrigation, and urbanization. The results of this assessment will be used in part by the Eastside EIS Team to determine the kinds of alternative management strategies that should be considered in the Eastside EIS.

A scientific evaluation of the alternatives considered in the draft Eastside EIS will also be completed by the Science Integration Team. This report will be used by the Eastside EIS Team as one of the source documents to prepare its analysis of the effects of alternative ecosystem management strategies for eastern Oregon and Washington, including effects of continued management under current BLM and Forest Service plans (i.e. the no action alternative).

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER MULTI-AGENCY ANALYSES

The President's Forest Plan

The land area involved in this EIS overlaps to some degree with the land area addressed in the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) and Record of Decision on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (Record of Decision signed on April 13, 1994). The decision addressed all lands within the range of the northern spotted owl, some of which are on the east side of the Cascade Crest. (Copies of these documents are available for inspection in all BLM and Forest Service offices as well as many local libraries.) It is these lands, which are within the range of the spotted owl and east of the Cascade Crest, that are within the scope of both this Eastside EIS and the SEIS mentioned above. Included in this overlap are parts of the Winema, Deschutes, Mt. Hood, Gifford Pinchot, Okanogan, and Wenatchee National Forests and the BLM Klamath Falls Resource Area. The decision made as a result of the SEIS provides the umbrella beneath which some alternatives will be considered in this Eastside EIS.

PACFISH

On March 25, 1994, a draft environmental assessment for Interim Strategies for Managing Anadromous Fish Producing Watersheds on Federal Lands in Eastern Oregon and Washington, Idaho, and Portions of California was mailed to the public. The environmental assessment is often referred to as PACFISH. This Eastside EIS will analyze a number of alternatives, one or more of which will include the interim direction from that process. It is expected that EISs will be initiated in Idaho and California to also analyze the interim direction. These EISs will be done in a coordinated manner between Forest Service Regional and BLM State Offices.

RANGELAND REFORM

The draft EIS for Rangeland Reform '94 is currently being reviewed. The Eastside EIS will consider information presented in that document and will address development of standards and guidelines for rangeland ecosystems for eastern Oregon and Washington.

FORMULATION OF ALTERNATIVE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Alternative management strategies will be developed by comparing existing conditions to desired conditions described by the public and Federal land managers and scientists. Information will be used from the basin-wide assessment, as well as the "Eastside Forest Ecosystem Health Assessment", recommendations of the "Eastside Forests Scientific Society Panel", and other sources. The selected alternative will be intended to serve as a means by which to move from today's conditions to those conditions desired by society and capable of being ecologically sustained, while leaving options available for future generations. The selected alternative will include integration of social values, ecological capabilities, and economic relationships. It will also address treaty rights reserved by various American Indian Tribes on ceded lands. The alternative will include management direction derived from analyses of conditions to (1) respond to current species and habitats of concern (currently listed or being considered for listing under the Endangered Species Act or designated as sensitive species by the BLM or Forest Service); (2) assure viability of species within the context of desired ecosystem function and structure; (3) support the needs of dynamic ecosystems that change over time and space; and (4) recognize the role that disturbance mechanisms play in ecosystem evolution and maintenance.

AGENCY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Forest Service will be the lead agency for this analysis with the BLM as a cooperating agency. The two agencies will consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service pursuant to the Endangered Species Act. Other cooperating federal agencies include: the Environmental Protection Agency, Soil Conservation Service, and the Bureau of Mines. Coordination with Tribal and State Governments will also occur.

The responsible official for National Forest System lands will be the Regional Forester, Pacific Northwest Region, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, Oregon 97208. The responsible official for public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management will be the State Director for Oregon and Washington, P.O. Box 2965, Portland, Oregon 97208. Official EIS files and supporting records will be maintained only by the Eastside Ecosystem Management Project at 112 E. Poplar St., Walla Walla, Washington 99362. Copies of published documents will be available from all affected BLM and Forest Service offices.

SCHEDULE AND PUBLIC REVIEW TIME FRAMES

The draft Eastside EIS is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in February 1995 and will be available for public review at that time. The comment period on the draft EIS will be a minimum of 90 days from the date the EPA publishes the notice of availability in the Federal Register.

It is expected that the final EIS will be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency approximately 6 months after the draft EIS is published. There will be two records of decisions issued; one for National Forest System Lands and one for BLM public lands in Oregon and Washington. The decision for National Forest System Lands will be subject to Forest Service appeal regulations (36 CFR 217). The proposed decisions for BLM lands will be subject to Bureau protest regulations (43 CFR 1610.5-2).

ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT IN THE BLM AND THE FOREST SERVICE

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (hereafter referred to as "the Agencies") are committed to safeguarding the ecological sustainability of public lands. By implementing management that conserves the diversity and protects the integrity of the land, the Agencies will ensure that present and future generations continue to derive economic, recreational, social, cultural, and aesthetic benefits from public lands.

The Agencies have adopted principles of ecosystem management to guide their management of public lands and resources. The purpose of this portion of this document is to define those principles, explain why the Agencies are adopting an ecosystem approach to management, demonstrate how ecosystem management differs from present management, and discuss the opportunities and challenges brought on by the Agencies' new management philosophy.

What is Ecosystem Management?

Ecosystem management recognizes that natural systems must be sustained in order to meet the social and economic needs of future generations.

Ecosystem management is the integration of ecological, economic, and social principles to manage biological and physical systems in a manner that safeguards the long-term ecological sustainability, natural diversity, and productivity of the landscape. The primary goal of ecosystem management is to develop management that conserves, restores, and maintains the ecological integrity, productivity and biological diversity of public lands. Among other things, sustainable ecosystems provide habitat for fish and wildlife, clean drinking water for communities, wood fiber, forage, and recreational opportunities.

Why is an Ecosystem Approach to Management of the Public Lands Necessary?

The cumulative effects of past activities on public and private lands have often led to degraded aquatic and riparian systems; less productive rangeland conditions; fragmented plant, animal, and fish habitats; and forest health problems. Human population growth, increased use, fire prevention, flood control, and other factors have also contributed to degradation of the public lands and caused significant declines in the range and numbers of many native flora and fauna.

Furthermore, the intentional and unintentional introduction of exotic plant, terrestrial, and aquatic species jeopardizes the biological diversity of the public lands. For example, the infestation of exotic, noxious weeds threatens the productivity of the western rangelands and the viability of many native plant communities. About 8 million acres of BLM land are infested by noxious weeds which spread at about 14 percent per year. In other words, 2,000-3,000 acres of productive BLM lands are lost to noxious weeds per day.

Nonetheless, public lands are the last refuges for many vanishing species. For example, over 191 federally listed threatened and endangered plant and animal species and over 1,100 candidate species occur on public lands managed by the Agencies. These lands also provide habitat for at least 109 salmon and steelhead stocks that are of concern at this time.

Ecosystem management safeguards ecological integrity and provides economic opportunities.

Communities whose economies depend on public lands are often the most seriously affected by ecological degradation. The declining timber and commercial and recreational fishing industries of the Pacific Northwest, for example, demonstrate the economic repercussions and social displacement that can accompany ecosystem degradation. Conservation efforts on public lands can make a critical difference to the viability of vulnerable plant and animal species and the stability of local economies. Poor forest and rangeland health, degraded riparian areas, and inferior aquatic habitats can threaten species viability, resource productivity, and ultimately, the overall sustainability of ecological systems.

How is Ecosystem Management Different From Current Management?

Traditionally, resource management strategies in the West have emphasized commodity production and the commercial use of natural resources. Management objectives were often designed to expedite the development, extraction, and/or production of resources on public lands. Other uses and values such as wildlife and fish habitats, some recreational activities, cultural, scenic, and aesthetic resources were often viewed as constraints or mitigation for more intensive uses.

Ecosystem management will assist the Agencies in coordinating efforts to identify and achieve desired conditions for public lands at multiple geographic levels. Ecosystems do not have absolute or permanent boundaries. They change and evolve in response to both human influence and natural events. Because ecological systems do not always correspond to existing administrative boundaries, the Agencies will encourage partnerships, share management responsibilities, and when appropriate, establish common management goals with other federal, state, and private land managers, local communities, and other interested parties.

Ecosystem management will not eliminate the necessity for making difficult choices.

The application of ecosystem management principles to public lands will not eliminate the need to make difficult resource allocation decisions. The overriding objective of ecosystem management is to ensure the ecological sustainability of the land. Ecological factors impose explicit limits on land use. The Agencies will make management decisions with a more informed understanding of the relationship among land management activities, site-capability, social and economic demands, ecological health and sustainability. Resources will be allocated within the constraints dictated by maintaining long-term ecosystem health.

BLM is responsible for 300 million acres of subsurface mineral estates. The leasing and operations of these lands should be conducted by the same principles that are applied to management of surface lands. BLM will participate appropriately in aspects of leasing and operations to ensure they conform to the principles of ecosystem management.

Ecosystem management provides a framework in which scientific information will be used to more objectively evaluate resource trade-off decisions. Successful implementation of ecosystem

management principles hinges on the integration of scientific information with resource management and allocation decisions. The Agencies will ensure that short-term economic and political objectives are integrated with long-term objectives designed to restore and maintain ecosystem integrity, productivity, and diversity. As new information becomes available, management direction will be modified to ensure that public lands managed by the Agencies will attain desired conditions.

ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

The Eastside Ecosystem Management Project has released version 1 of a Working Draft of the Framework for Ecosystem Management in the Interior Columbia River Basin. This document recognizes at least four basic principles for ecosystem management:

1. Ecosystems are dynamic and evolutionary.
2. It is useful to view ecosystems as being organized within a hierarchy of scales of time and space.
3. Ecosystems have biophysical and social limits.
4. There are limits to the predictability of ecosystem patterns and processes; conditions and events may be predictable at some scales but not at others.

The Agencies will use these principles to guide development of alternatives in the Eastside EIS. For more information, a copy of the above referenced Framework for Ecosystem Management can be reviewed at local BLM and Forest Service offices. A copy can also be requested by contacting the EEMP office in Walla Walla.

MONITORING AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Monitoring and inventory information will be used to assess the effect of management actions on ecosystem health. The results of monitoring will be integrated into management decisions and actions will be adapted as resource conditions warrant. Management prescriptions will be adapted to reflect changing ecosystem conditions; consider the management actions of other federal, state, and private landowners; balance the effects of management on the condition of the land; and obtain stated objectives. Monitoring programs will be developed that clearly describe baseline resource threshold levels, which, if exceeded, will trigger delay, modification, or cancellation of management activities and/or refinement of management direction.

The Agencies will coordinate with other agencies and interested publics to review and apply appropriate monitoring methods and techniques to the public lands. Whenever possible, management, monitoring, and inventory will be coordinated across administrative boundaries and conducted in a manner that effectively demonstrates the health of an ecosystem. Monitoring will ensure that: 1) management direction is implemented, 2) management direction is effective, and 3) management assumptions about ecological conditions and their response to treatments remain valid over time.

MOVING TOWARDS ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT: OPPORTUNITIES IN THE BLM AND FOREST SERVICE

The Agencies are participating in a number of efforts that are consistent with many of the principles of ecosystem management. Several of these are described below:

Bring Back the Natives (fish habitat restoration campaign)

The Agencies and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation are in the third year of a cooperative aquatic species restoration campaign that emphasizes interagency coordination, watershed management, and improved land use practices to conserve and restore aquatic and riparian habitats on federal lands. In 1994, over 50 projects will focus on restoring native species to 14 states.

Neotropical Migratory Birds / Partners in Flight

Partners in Flight (PIF) is a coordinated, international effort designed to conserve neo-tropical migratory bird species and associated habitats. PIF establishes national, regional, state, and physiographic province working groups that coordinate monitoring, research, and public education efforts on neotropical migratory birds and their habitats. PIF working groups are comprised of federal and state agencies and private organizations that work together to integrate management efforts for migratory birds.

MOVING TOWARDS ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT: CHALLENGES FOR THE BLM AND FOREST SERVICE

The Agencies are faced with numerous legislative, political, regulatory, programmatic, and cultural obstacles that may hinder the successful implementation of ecosystem management. Our ability to resolve these and other issues will directly influence the efficacy of ecosystem management.

Management Incentives

Historically, federal agencies have been rewarded for achieving targets based on the production of commodities. Other objectives, especially those that were non-consumptive, such as aesthetic and scenic values and some recreation, were sometimes neglected. Since the production of all goods and services is dependent on ecosystem health, the overriding objective should be to maintain naturally diverse and sustainable ecological systems. Federal agencies should develop management incentives that are based on the present state and desired future trend of resource conditions (with consideration given to the effects of past activities and natural events on the land; i.e., fire, drought, etc.).

Administrative Boundaries

Agency attempts to implement an ecosystem approach to management are complicated by the presence of administrative boundaries that typically do not correspond to ecologically based boundaries. Boundaries for the public lands were primarily delineated to accomplish social and political goals. Ecosystems occur at a variety of scales and federal agencies are rarely the sole

managers of large, self-contained ecological systems. In addition, state and federal agencies often operate under different legislative mandates.

The agencies' ability to recognize ecologically based boundaries would assist them to define long-term resource condition trends and objectives from a landscape perspective and would greatly enhance the ability of resource managers to predict and assess the effects of management activities on the land. The Agencies are prepared to enter into agreements and partnerships with private, State, tribal, and other federal land managers to coordinate planning, adaptive management, and monitoring.

The Role of other Agencies, Universities, and Researchers

The National Biological Survey (NBS), USDA Forest Service Research Stations, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), university research programs, and others could assist land management agencies to integrate administrative boundaries with ecologically based boundaries in order to:

- Identify management units that facilitate cumulative effects and/or watershed analyses;
- Map the habitats of threatened and endangered species and rare flora and fauna on public lands;
- Identify sustainable commodity production levels within an ecologically based boundary (e.g., timber harvest in a watershed, forage production across a landscape); and
- Implement threatened and endangered species recovery programs.

The researchers would be well-equipped to review and analyze existing and potential landscape analysis techniques (e.g., Geographic Information System (GIS) technology, Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program (EMAP), Landscape Ecology Modelling and Analysis (LEMA), and GAP Analysis) to utilize their full potential as analytical tools to manage the federal lands.

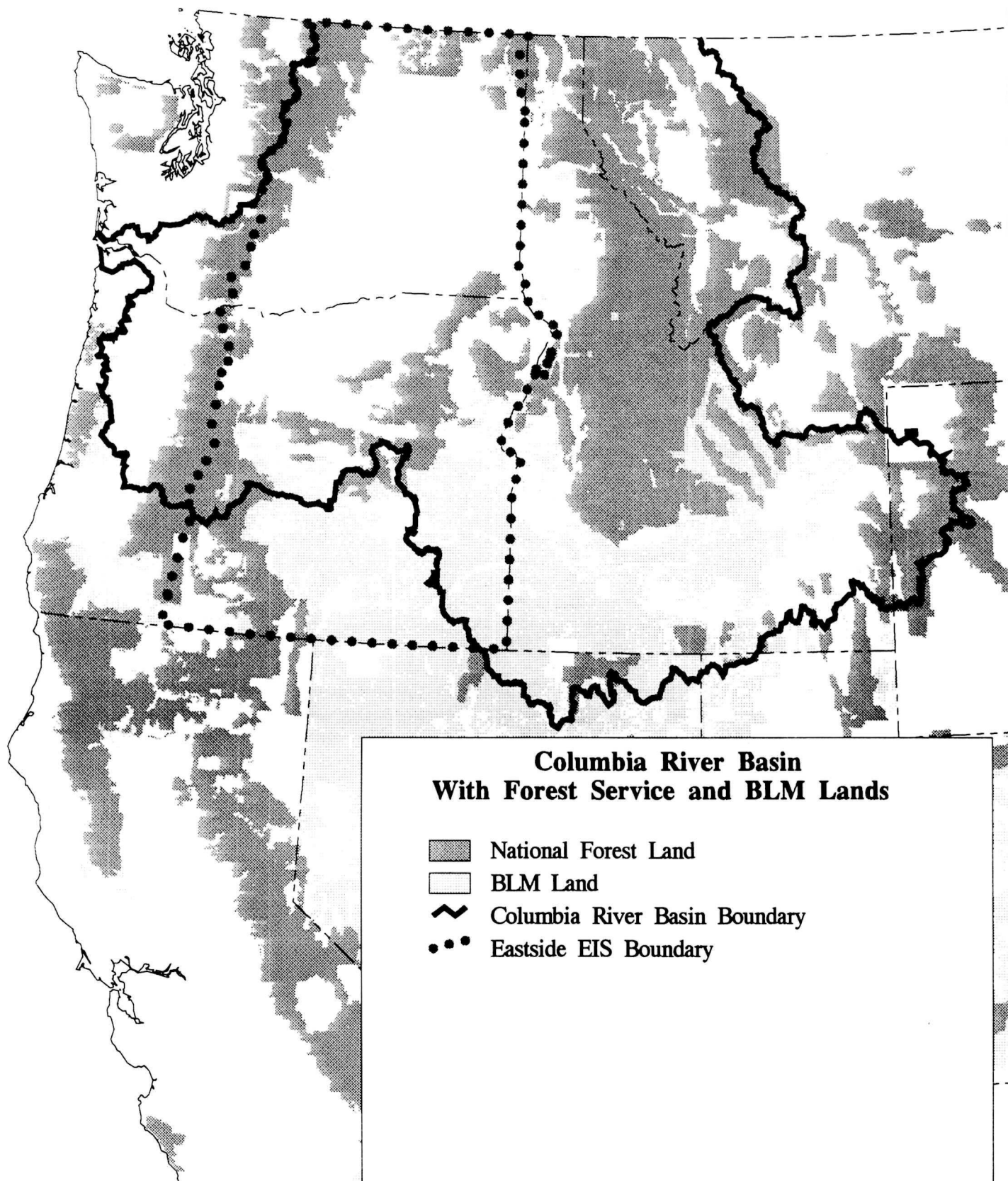
Resource and Data Classification Systems

Coordination among management agencies is impeded by the fact that federal land management agencies often employ different data standards and resource classification systems.





Standardization in the following areas would promote interagency coordination:

- classification of watersheds, rivers and streams
- classification of standing waters
- classification of wetlands, meadows, and bogs
- classification of soil types and land forms
- classification of vegetation and riparian areas

Land management agencies use different computer systems which further complicates information sharing. The creation of a land management agency computer network and data base should follow the standardization of data elements and data collection processes. The ability of land management agencies to cross-link resource data and other information is vital to managing diverse systems such as watersheds and vegetation types.



Columbia River Basin With Forest Service and BLM Lands

-  National Forest Land
-  BLM Land
-  Columbia River Basin Boundary
-  Eastside EIS Boundary

BLM Land Is Not Shown For Eastern California, Montana or Wyoming

April 1994 Projection: Albers
USDA Forest Service Region 6 Geometrics Group GIS Unit